



## The Holy See

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***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II  
AL NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DI MALTA  
PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE S.E. IL SIGNOR  
ALESSANDRO CACHIA ZAMMIT\****

*Sabato, 12 dicembre 1987*

Mr Ambassador.

As I receive the Letters of Credence with which you solemnly begin your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Malta to the Holy See, first of all I wish to thank you sincerely for your noble words, and I send my respectful good wishes to the President and the entire population of Malta, whose warm sentiments you have communicated to eloquently to me.

The message you have just presented offers me the pleasant opportunity to recall the relations of affection and respect that the Apostolic See has always enjoyed with Malta. At this moment I clearly cannot pause to consider all the individual reasons that make Malta so dear, but even with a brief consideration of her history I cannot fail to mention certain of her distinctive qualities, such as her dignified pride, her moral richness, her cultural patrimony and, above all, her deeply religious spirit. It is well known, in fact, that from the day the Apostle Paul landed, in dramatic circumstances, on the beaches of that picturesque land and lit there the light of the gospel, the people of Malta have not ceased to illuminate their path with the torch of the Christian faith, safeguarding the values of the spirit, of the family and of the integrity of social morality. I wish to testify to these virtues today, and to recognize the courage of the Maltese, who, in spite of the various difficulties they have had to face, have maintained their ethnic identity and their historical roots through the centuries.

2. I very much appreciated your reference to the renewed commitment of the people of Malta to the promotion of peace, of this supreme good on which both man's future and the progress of

society depend. Malta, which lies in the middle of the beautiful Mediterranean, has a significant role to play in favour of a more just order, one which has greater respect not only for inalienable human rights, but for the fundamental and legitimate freedoms of individuals and of nations.

I am certain that the government of Malta will show itself capable of making an effective contribution to this historical and geographic vocation, by promoting respect for all citizens, especially the weakest and least privileged, by promoting justice, social and economic development, understanding, solidarity and harmony among all the citizens on the national plane, and collaboration on the international plane, especially within the Mediterranean basin.

3. The Church, for her part, will not fail to make her own specific contribution, as she has always sought to do, according to the conditions of the day, in the course of her two thousand-year history, as you, Mr. Ambassador, have recalled.

In fulfilling the duty to evangelize which was entrusted to her by her divine Founder, the Church takes special care to promote the whole human person with all his needs, not only as an individual but also as a member of the community. In fact, the Christian faith offers excellent stimuli and forms of assistance also for the work of building a more just world.

In the accomplishment of this task, the State and the Church, since they must serve the same persons, persons who are simultaneously members of both the Church and the civil community, cannot evade the duty to collaborate, each with its own means and with respect for another's autonomy. In order that this may come about in an ordered and fruitful way, they must seek together the most fitting forms or collaboration, also through pacts, where opportune.

In this context, it is my hope that a mutually satisfying conclusion may be reached in the dialogue initiated at various levels between representatives of the Holy See and of the particular Church on the one hand, and of the State on the other, with the aim of defining important questions of common interest.

Furthermore, I have no doubt that the relations between Church and State will always be animated by a spirit of friendly cooperation, in common solicitude for the spiritual good and the civil and social growth of the dear nation which you, Mr. Ambassador, begin today to represent before the Holy See.

With these best wishes I welcome you most cordially; and as I wish you the fruitful fulfillment of your high mission, I impart to you, to the representatives, of the Government and to the entire population of Malta my special and heartfelt blessing.

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